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ICWA Letters

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

The Incredible Shrinking Special Economic Zone, Part I

By Elena Agarkova

Elena Agarkova is studying management of natural resources and the relationship between Siberia's natural riches and its people. Previously, Elena was a Legal Fellow at the University of Washington's School of Law, at the Berman Environmental Law Clinic. She has clerked for Honorable Cynthia M. Rufe of the federal district court in Philadelphia, and has practiced commercial litigation at the New York office of Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP. Elena was born in Moscow, Russia, and has volunteered for environmental non-profits in the Lake Baikal region of Siberia. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 2001, and has received a bachelor's degree in political science from Barnard College.

Institute of Current World Affairs

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LAKE BAIKAL, IRKUTSK REGION, Russia

The Characters:

The Bolshoye Goloustnoye villagers: over 600 people of Buryat and Russian descent.

Local Administration: the mayor of Bolshoye Goloustnoye.

Irkutsk tourism firms: several small and medium sized local businesses.

The Pribaikalskii National Park: Bolshoye Goloustnoye is within the park's territory.

The Irkutsk administration: the governor, the agency of tourism, the agency of nature and ecology.

Siberian scientists.

The federal government: the special economic zones (SEZ) agency and its representatives in Irkutsk.

Outside experts: Consulting, architectural, and planning firms from Germany, Austria, and St. Petersburg.

Foreign tourism firms: incognito for now.

The action takes place on Lake Baikal. Or does it?

Synopsis

In the previous newsletter I described the Russian federal government's initiative to lift depressed regions out of the economic slump, by creating special economic zones of several types across the country. The main characteristic that these zones have in common is a more lax tax regime, along with a simplified administrative process and very cheap land rental prices. Both administrative regions on the eastern and west-

A view of Bolshoye Goloustnoye, the current proposed site for the Irkutsk tourist SEZ.

ern shores of Baikal, Irkutsk and Buryatia, won in the federal competition to create tourist SEZs. Tourist SEZs have as their goal stimulation of local economies. The government finances tourism infrastructure, such as roads, electricity lines and waste disposal facilities. The government also attracts private investors, who build hotels, spas, organize recreational activities in the SEZ, and, most importantly, bring the tourists.

The planning process for Baikal tourism SEZs is still in the early stages, but both zones have already changed shape and form several times. These permutations will likely not stop soon.

Here I explore the Irkutsk tourist SEZ, currently planned for the village of Bolshoye Goloustnoye. The current economic situation puts its future in question. But if the SEZ does come into being, who will benefit from it? Who makes the decisions regarding the specific details of the zone, and how? Contradictory regulations, corruption, and lack of transparency further complicate the process itself and any attempts to study it. The Irkutsk tourist SEZ has as its goal development of local economy, but my research shows that so far no one asked the inhabitants of Bolshoye Goloustnoye for their input, and there are no definite plans to include them in the planning process. Local tourism businesses and the national park, on whose territory the SEZ will exist, feel they have been deliberately excluded from any planning and decision-making. Local businesses also think that, given the SEZ's planned scale, they cannot afford to invest there. Will the zone end up with Moscow and foreign companies as its residents, who will make money off Baikal and send their profits elsewhere? Or will the government and the investors lose money on this venture, because of global financial turmoil, lack of necessary experience, economic miscalculations, or some unpredictable factor?

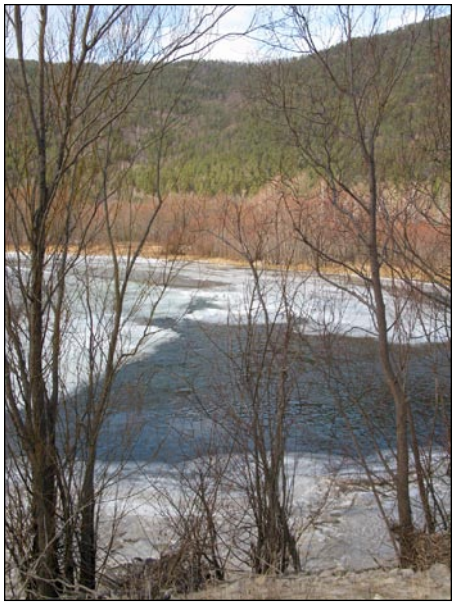
Creation of the Irkutsk tourist SEZ is an example of decision making on all levels of Russian society that affects local economies, management of protected natural territories, people's culture and traditions, environmental considerations, and development of business. I talked to the different people and entities whose interests the SEZ affects, to understand how the balancing of these interests happens — or doesn't.

Act One. First Metamorphoses

Bolshoye Goloustnoye is a small village on the shore of Lake Baikal, about 110 kilometers away from Irkutsk. The road has asphalt for the first 30 kilometers leading out of the city. After that it's gravel.

It's a picturesque road that, once out of the city, shoots straight through a couple of villages and then heads into forested hills. The gravel is well kept, and if the road is not too icy, you can drive at a decent speed.

It's not easy to get to the village by public transport. A bus goes from Irkutsk to Bolshoye Goloustnoye once a day, at 4 p.m. It comes back at 8 a.m. the next morning, and since the trip takes at least two hours, you have to stay more than one night if you want to see any of the local sights. I convinced a friend of mine to drive me to the village because I wanted to take another look at the proposed site for the tourist SEZ — I visited Bolshoye Goloustnoye once, two years ago — and to talk to locals about these plans. The friend, even though she is from Irkutsk and has traveled around



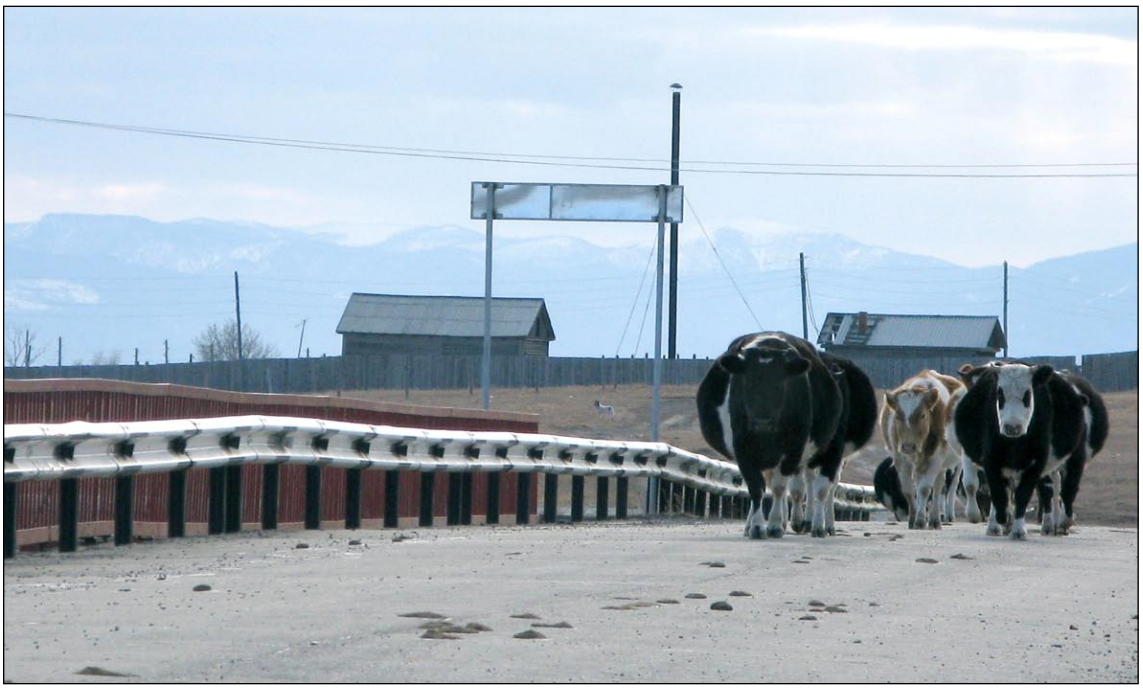
(left) Not many cars use the road to Bolshoye Goloustnoye on a cold November day. (right) In contrast to the road from Irkutsk to Listvyanka, you won't find many cafes and stores along the road to Bolshoye Goloustnoye.

Baikal extensively, had never been there. She got curious, so on a cloudy November afternoon we left Irkutsk. After almost three hours on the road we arrived just in time to see clouds lift on the other side of Baikal.

The village is named after the river that flows into Baikal and on which it stands. Bolshoye means "big," and Goloustnoye can be translated as "naked delta." Indeed, as you drive through the mountain range that runs along Baikal's shore, you come out to a wide delta almost devoid of trees. It's a wide, open triangular space framed by mountain slopes on the north and south.

The village, or all four streets of it, runs along the southern slope. Houses begin near the spot where the river flows out of the mountains, and come almost all the way down to the shore of Baikal. The southern mountain slope is bare and rocky at the bottom half. Pines grow at the top half.

Bolshoye Goloustnoye is over 300 years old. Buryat families, people ethnically close to the Mongols, came here first, around 1673. Russians families began settling here



The first sight as one drives up to the bridge across the Goloustnoye river, cows that wonder across the bridge from the village to nearby pastures.

The climb is not very steep and it offers good views of the lake and of the snowy mountains on the other shore.

around 1740. The Buryats lived in settlements of two to three families, called "ulusy." These originally were on the other side of the delta, under the northern slope. In 1954 the inhabitants had to move their houses to the southern side because a new dam on the Angara River threatened to raise the level of Baikal by several meters. The flood was not as big as feared. The dam, which started operating in 1959, raised the level of Baikal by one meter. But the people had already moved by that point, and today the village horses and cows cross the river delta every day to get to the pastures under the northern slope.

People's attention turned to this sleepy village a year ago, after the federal government shot down the Irkutsk proposal to build a tourist SEZ in Listvyanka, a village about 50 minutes away from Irkutsk. The head of the federal SEZ agency announced a decision to move the SEZ site to Bolshoye Goloustnoye shortly after he visited to the Irkutsk region in autumn of last year. The reasons for the move seem complicated — the recent arrest of the mayor of Listvyanka may or may not have something to do with the final outcome — and people still disagree on the reasons that led to this change.

Initially the regional Irkutsk government proposed to create an all-season resort in Listvyanka, with a focus on "business tourism," a special type of tourism that encompasses professional conferences, seminars, exhibitions, and corporate retreats, including "team-building" outings. The proposal called for construction of about 28 hotels, 300 cottages, a business center, an aqua-park, sports and wellness centers, including a skiing resort, with a total receiving capacity of more than 11,000 people a day (or almost 4 million a year). The proposal optimistically assumed an enormous increase in tourists who would want to visit Baikal on the Irkutsk side — and spend more than a couple of days in one area. Such an increase appears unrealistic given tourism statistics, trends, and the specifics of tourism on Baikal. A little over 500,000 tourists visited the entire Irkutsk region last year. The number of tourists has increased steadily every year, until now. This summer local tour operators reported a drop, explained by the rising prices of food and fuel, which raised the overall cost of vacationing on Baikal and kept potential visitors at bay. Finally, Baikal's short summer season, and its severe winters naturally limit the number of people who choose to experience the beauty of the world's deepest, purest lake.

The Irkutsk region won in the federal competition that created seven tourist SEZs around the country, but the federal agency changed the proposal drastically since then.

First, the federal SEZ agency announced a competition for consulting and architectural firms. The winner got a $3.6 million contract to design all seven tourist SEZs. A German consulting firm, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, won

Bolshoye Goloustnoye dogs react to each car as if it was the first vehicle they've ever seen.

the bid. Their previous experience in the field of tourism development included projects in Croatia and in Okinawa, Japan. Roland Berger worked on the concept of Russian tourist SEZs together with several other companies: the German architectural bureau of Albert Speer & Partner, an Austrian company, Deloitte Corporate Finance, and several Russian entities. These included the federal Institute for Economy in Transition and the Academy of National Economy, the Russian State Institute of City Planning and Investment Development, and a private company called the International Center of Socioeconomic Research, from St. Petersburg.

The delta of the Goloustnoye river. The SEZ site is to the left of the river.

The consultants downsized the Irkutsk SEZ. They cut the zone's tourist hosting capacity from eleven to four thousand tourists a day, still requiring a huge increase to almost 1.5 million additional tourists a year in the region, from today's 500,000. Roland Berger and their partners also changed the zone's orientation, from business tourism to active and cruise-type tourism. They suggested using some alternative sources of energy and resource-conservation technologies, and called for moving around the zone on bicycles, in electric cars and in dog sleds.

After the SEZ agency decided to move the zone from Listvyanka to Bolshoye Goloustnoye, more downsizing followed. In September the Irkutsk government presented the latest SEZ model at the Baikal Economic Forum. This model called for building about 11 hotels and several "bungalows," for 3,600 tourists a day (I've also seen estimates of hotel capacity as low as 1,200 tourists a day). But the government's estimates of how many tourists will actually come to the SEZ have sharply dropped. They project that by 2026 about 79,000 tourists will visit Bolshoye Goloustnoye, a huge reduction from the initial projections of a million-plus new tourists.

The future site of the SEZ, under the northern slope.

The total cost of the project, as calculated in 2007, amounted to 4.6 million rubles of government money (for necessary infrastructure), and more than 8 million rubles in private investment. According to the agreement between the federal government and the Irkutsk region, the governments would split the cost almost evenly.

The zone would be located across the river from the village, on pastureland along the northern mountain slope. At the Baikal Economic Forum the Irkutsk governor presented a map of the zone, with three different building clusters ("adventure," "wellness," and "sport" villages), a rock-climbing

A view of the village and the northern slope, the SEZ site, across the river.

area, a horse-riding area/ "rodeo arena," and a yacht dock.

The map had an ellipse in the river delta, designated as a "walking area." Right now this area has wetlands and small lakes, home to endangered endemic birds and plants. Some of them, as the vice-director of the Pribaikalskii National Park told me recently, don't exist anywhere else in the Baikal region. Irkutsk ornithologists even asked to include the Goloustnoye delta in the Russian system of key ornithological territories, and to create a special protection regime for the delta, with national park oversight. This was not done. When local scientists and ecologists expressed their concerns about the endemic species of the Goloustnoye delta, a representative of the federal SEZ agency stated that endangered endemics on the territory of the SEZ are a wonderful thing for business: "We will create flowerbeds around these plants, so that our visitors can enjoy them."

The notion that endangered plants can survive in flowerbeds in the middle of a tourist "walking zone" is absurd. Even several dozen people a day can irreparably damage the Goloustnaya delta. Plants and animals that locals protect because they know these species are endangered and will disappear because of ignorance, lack of oversight, and simple vandalism. From what I've seen around Baikal, no sign or warning stops an intoxicated, rowdy visitor from littering or chopping down trees for wood. On the island of Olkhon tourists have practically decimated the slender racer, a harmless endemic snake which exists only in a couple of places around the Lake. But tourists see only a potentially dangerous snake. They don't have time to consult a guidebook on local fauna. They get scared and they pick up a rock.

Any conservation effort that depends on cooperation and voluntary compliance from tourists is doomed to fail. Opening up access to the Goloustnoye delta will mean destruction of the local ecosystem.

But the current SEZ model is not final. The government plans to build only the necessary infrastructure, i.e. fully asphalt the only road to the village, bring in additional power lines, build sewage and waste disposal facilities, provide electricity and water. All of the other facilities on the map are suggestions for potential investors. It's the federal agency's vision of one possible scenario of SEZ development but the individual investors are free to propose different facilities, which will need to comply with certain general criteria. For example, the SEZ concept calls for one- or two-story buildings in traditional Siberian or Buryat architectural style. The proposal does not provide any photos of what the SEZ planners have in mind, however. A traditional "Siberian" house is a simple wooden structure with decorative window shutters. A traditional Buryat house is a yurt, a round, movable structure made of felt, with rarer instances of wooden yurts. At this point the federal agency has yet to approve the plan of infrastructure placement in the SEZ. The representative of the federal agency in Irkutsk told me that they expect infrastructure planning to be done by February of next year. That's also when they expect potential investors to show more interest in the project, even

though, as the representative said, "it would make more sense to build the infrastructure in line with the specific investors' needs."

The Mangaskin family, Misha and Faina, in their living room.

When I asked the federal agency representative about local input into the project, and specifically, whether the agency conducted any public hearings for the Bolshoye Goloustnoye SEZ (as they did earlier for the Listvyanka SEZ proposal), she said there have not been any. She also said that because the zone encroaches on traditional burial and sacred places, the agency is offering the villagers an opportunity to create a traditional Buryat village in that area. The agency is waiting for the villagers to come forward with a proposal. But as I found out later, the agency has not made any attempts to contact the locals. There have been no public meetings, no documents distributed, no official presentations to explain the process of SEZ creation to the people of Bolshoye Goloustnoye. They learn about the zone from the newspapers, television, and from many rumors. The local mayor, when some of the villagers approached him with questions about the project, apparently said they should go to Irkutsk to talk to the federal agency representative. As far as I know, the agency has no plans to visit Bolshoye Goloustnoye in the near future to discuss the zone with the locals. The notion that the government and its experts should take into account the villagers' point of view does not seem to have crossed anyone's mind.

Act Two. On the Ground

When I came to Bolshoye Goloustnoye this November, one of the villagers I wanted to talk to was Faina Mangaskina, a local teacher who for some time was a president of the Buryat Cultural Center in the village, and has been hosting tourists at her house since the 1990s. I was curious what she thought of the SEZ.

Faina and her husband Misha live in a wooden house nearby the village school. She was born in Bolshoye Goloustnoye, studied in Irkutsk for six years, and came back to the village in 1975. She still teaches music in a local school, which has about 100 kids.

A couple of years ago two telephone companies from Irkutsk installed cell-phone towers for the first time in Bolshoye Goloustnoye, and now Faina and Misha both have second jobs in one of the companies. During perestroika, the period of economic reforms that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev initiated in 1987, the local forestry agency, the main official source of jobs here, closed down and unemployment was severe.[1] Locals had to resort to living off the land. Men

The new cell phone towers stand directly on the shore of Baikal, next to the remnants of a dilapidated dock.

1 Perestroika is a Russian word which has as its root the word "stroika," or construction. Until Gorbachev, perestroika usually referred to renovation and/or structural changes to a building. Gorbachev adopted the word, along with glasnost', or openness, as a slogan for his reforms.

took to fishing, weaving their own nets. Women grew vegetables and tended cows. Hay-making time is still a frantic season here.

Around 1995 the first foreign tourists started to come to Bolshoye Goloustnoye. At that time an American named Hank Birnbaum came to work in the Pribaikalskii National Park (for a salary of about $13 a month) and lived in the village for a few years. Faina and Misha were among the villagers who befriended Hank, and he began to send some of his foreign guests to stay with Faina and other locals.

A lone tree stands in the middle of the Goloustnoye delta.

Dozens more tourists came each year. Now Faina works with a network of "homestays," local families that open their homes to tourists. Homestays offer basic accommodations, a Russian sauna, and food cooked on a traditional Russian stove. But the most important service they provide is real, engaged interaction with locals. Tourism agencies from as far as Australia bring their tourists to Bolshoye Goloustnoye homestays for a taste of life in a Siberian village.

Faina says, "I wondered, why are they coming here? I didn't understand them at first. But then, talking to Hank, I started to understand them more. After I visited the U.S., I understood them even better, why they come from their civilization to our taiga.[2]"

Why, I ask? "They lose everything. People who live in a big town are removed from the land. They come here and start asking me questions — do you milk your own cow? You grow your own vegetables? These potatoes are so tasty. Your milk is incredible. When they leave, they're like family."

One of the many houses in the village that advertises rooms and a sauna.

Faina writes down some of the visitors' comments. "They tell me that we don't need tall buildings here; they have plenty of that where they come from. They're tired of those things. They come here, go for a walk, hike one of our mountains and say, it's so peaceful and quiet. I feel that humans are forgetting who they are, where they are from, what their purpose is. They don't think about these things anymore."

She knows that her home is here. "Of course living on the land, tending to our animals, is not the only meaningful purpose in life. I too enjoy traveling. But when I was in the U.S., I missed the smell of taiga. I came back, I inhaled this cold air, and I got teary eyed. I didn't think such longing was possible before. And I didn't spend

2 Baikal lies amidst thousands of kilometers of taiga and steppe (see below). Taiga is a Russian word that the world scientific community adopted for forests found south of the tundra (flat, treeless arctic areas) in cold, wet climates, consisting of a mostly coniferous community (evergreen pines, cedars, stunted spruces, firs). In drier climates taiga also has birches and aspens. Taiga stretches across North America and Eurasia, comprising about one third of the forest land of the world. In the Russian Urals and in Siberia taiga dips further south than in Europe. Taiga has long, severe winters that last 6 or 7 months of the year.

more than ten days in America!"[3]

Among Faina's favorite memories from the trip are visits to Native American tribes and local libraries where people gathered to do arts and crafts. She was especially inspired by local artisans and wonders how that experience could be replicated on Baikal. "I want to organize a seminar for local young men and women, to brainstorm, what can we make here that will be interesting to our guests? Many tourists would love to buy hand-knit things. We have plenty of wool here. I've talked to old women in our village, and they say they have so much wool, they throw it out. But we buy wool blankets made abroad instead of using what we have. This is not just our problem, this is a Russian problem. Why can't we make things here instead of paying extravagant prices for foreign things?"

Faina is not opposed to "civilization" or to the idea of the special economic zone in Bolshoye Goloustnoye. The money from tourists is an important part of their income. But she is concerned about preserving their way of life, protecting Baikal and explaining local culture to tourists. She and her husband see the Bolshoye Goloustnoye's remoteness and quietness as a plus for tourists who avoid an already developed area like Listvyanka because they want to see a real Siberian village.

When I ask Faina and Misha what they think about the SEZ proposal, they answer me with a question: "Has anything been finalized?" They are upset that the authorities have done so little to explain what will happen to the land across the river. But they don't seem to be angry. Most importantly, they don't seem to have any expectations of changing the project. All they want is to make sure that their cattle will have access to pasture (the future SEZ site is where all village horses and cows walk every day to graze), and that the Irkutsk officials listen to their proposal for a cultural center.

I tell them about my talks with the federal SEZ agency

New construction on the shore of Baikal. Technically, construction on the shore is prohibited. The local administration would be the entity giving out permits for these houses.

3 Faina went to Seattle, Lake Tahoe, and San Francisco on an educational exchange trip organized by the Great Baikal Trail and the Earth Island Institute, a San Francisco non-profit environmental organization.

A local and his cow take a stroll to Baikal together.

representative in Irkutsk, and show a Power Point map of the SEZ that the Irkutsk administration presented at the Baikal Economic Forum in September. Faina and Misha spent a long time studying the map and the proposed facilities. They're surprised at the size of the project. They get especially alarmed by the ellipse that designates the "walking area" on the SEZ map. "These are wetlands that drain into Baikal. It's a buffer zone that's very important for the lake," says Faina. "Maybe if they build boardwalks, it could work."

Misha disagrees. "They shouldn't build anything there. Any construction, any tourists will scare off the birds and the animals. They'll never come back."

Misha is convinced that the authentic village will win over the artificial one: "As long as we preserve our village as it is, more tourists will come to us than to them." Faina is more cautious in her predictions: "Those who want to have a good time will stay in the hotels. But those tourists are rare. We had a group of Germans staying with us who asked us where there is a bar in the village." Faina laughs. "They need to go somewhere else, have a drink, look around…"

Earlier, when I spoke to Faina on the phone from Irkutsk, she complained that the local mayor was not giving the villagers any details about the SEZ project: "It's as if it's a secret." She's been planning to go into town to talk to the federal agency representative about her idea for a cultural center in the zone. "If people come here, they need to know where they are; they need to learn about Baikal, about the history and ecology of this place." Faina asked the local administration for a plot of land for such a center but the administration turned her down.

We stay up talking until after midnight. As tired as they are, Faina and Misha can't stop sharing their ideas. One of their dreams is to organize a children's camp, using the horses they own for therapy purposes.

In addition to building a Buryat cultural center, Faina would like to see a Baikal museum on the shore of the lake, a museum that would use water directly from Baikal in its exhibits. She would like to write a grant for sewing traditional Buryat folk costumes. "They are very expensive to make nowadays." Faina worked with several old Buryat women who sang traditional songs, for tourists, outdoors in the steppe.[4] But the women are getting old. "We need to train the new generation. I need to sit down and learn these songs myself." She talks of a cultural festival that takes place each June in the Olkhon area, north of Bolshoye Goloustnoye. Buryat and other Mongol athletes come together for several days of traditional sport competitions. "We should have these kinds of festivals too. But when our administra-

4 Steppe, or extended treeless plain, also comes from a Russian word (step'). Steppe is associated with Eastern Russia and Siberia. It's similar to North American western prairies.

tion organized the Day of Baikal, it was nothing more than a sham, a chance for people to get drunk. Let's do some real work for a change!"

Faina has her ideas about the SEZ. "If this zone gets built, it's necessary to think through all options. What do we want to offer our tourists? There's no need to drastically change anything. We should be using what we have already."

Act Three. A Possibility of Change

It's not too late to take into account Faina's and other local opinions. (I will discuss other points of view, those of the Pribaikalskii National Park, local tourism businesses, and the Irkutsk tourism agency, in the next newsletter). One option is to give them a seat on the SEZ Watch Committee, a body that the federal agency set up to coordinate the process of SEZ creation. The Committee's responsibilities include consideration of SEZ development plans and control over their "realization." Right now the Committee includes only federal and local officials, but the SEZ law provides for other members, including "representatives of SEZ residents and other organizations." It only makes sense to include all interested stakeholders in the process of discussing the future of the SEZ, such as the villagers of Bolshoye Goloustnoye.

The SEZ project is in the planning stages only. Given the current financial crisis, it's not clear whether the Irkutsk region and the federal government will want to spend 2 billion rubles each on infrastructure for an SEZ that lacks committed investors. The federal SEZ agency representative, when I asked her about the governmental financing of the SEZ, said she has not heard about any budget cuts as of yet. But the Irkutsk governor has returned the regional budget for 2009 back to the administration for edits. This was done after the federal Ministry of Finances sent out a letter mandating a "conservative approach" to regional budgets. The federal SEZ agency representative said that the SEZ money will not be included in the Irkutsk regional budget: "It will probably be added to the budget once the agency approves the infrastructure plan, next February."

Andrei Alpatov, the head of the federal SEZ agency, just gave an interview to a Russian newspaper "Gazeta," in which he said that the world financial crisis has not affected the business interest in the SEZ. But he acknowledged that there are some crisis after-effects: "The crisis is forcing us to analyze in more detail the business plans of those companies that want to become [SEZ] residents. Specifically, it's necessary to determine whether they have their own money for implementation of their project, and, if they are planning to take out loans, how real are the guarantees that they will receive these funds. Since there are serious problems with receiving loans right now, there is a danger that in the coming year the dynamic of tourist SEZs will slow down, because in these zones construction of facilities is in many cases financed by loans."

The SEZ in Bolshoye Goloustnoye may never get built. But if it does, now is the time to re-think the concept and the goals of the zone. Who will benefit most from several hotels and who will lose? How can the federal government assure that the local economy gets the most benefit out of the zone and its visitors? Is the government willing to listen to local voices? The story continues. ❑

Rays breaking through winter clouds over Baikal.

Current Fellows

Elena Agarkova • RUSSIA
May 2008 - 2010

Elena will be living in Siberia, studying management of natural resources and the relationship between Siberia's natural riches and its people. Previously, Elena was a Legal Fellow at the University of Washington's School of Law, at the Berman Environmental Law Clinic. She has clerked for Honorable Cynthia M. Rufe of the federal district court in Philadelphia, and has practiced commercial litigation at the New York office of Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP. Elena was born in Moscow, Russia, and has volunteered for environmental non-profits in the Lake Baikal region of Siberia. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 2001, and has received a bachelor's degree in political science from Barnard College.

Pooja Bhatia • HAITI
September 2008 - 2010

Pooja attended Harvard as an undergraduate, and then worked for the Wall Street Journal for a few years. She graduated from Harvard Law School. She was appointed Harvard Law School Satter Human Rights Fellow in 2007 and worked as an attorney with the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, which advocates and litigates on behalf of Haiti's poor.

Eve Fairbanks • SOUTH AFRICA
May 2009 - 2011

Eve is a New Republic staff writer interested in character and in how individuals fit themselves into new or changing societies. Through that lens, she will be writing about medicine and politics in the new South Africa. At the New Republic, she covered the first Democratic Congress since 1992 and the 2008 presidential race; her book reviews have also appeared the New York Times. She graduated with a degree in political science from Yale, where she also studied music.

Ezra Fieser • GUATEMALA
January 2008 - 2010

Ezra is interested in economic and political changes in Central America. He is an ICWA fellow living in Guatemala where he will write about the country's rapidly changing economic structure and the effects on its politics, culture and people. He was formerly the deputy city editor for The (Wilmington, Del.) News Journal, a staff writer for Springfield (Mass.) Republican and a Pulliam Fellow at The Arizona Republic. He is a graduate of Emerson College in Boston.

Suzy Hansen • TURKEY
April 2007 - 2009

A John O. Crane Memorial Fellow, Suzy will be writing about politics and religion in Turkey. A former editor at the New York Observer, her work has also appeared in Salon, the New York Times Book Review, the Nation, and other publications. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1999.

Cecilia Kline • CENTRAL AMERICA
January 2009 - 2011

Cecilia is a graduate of Georgetown University, Loyola University Chicago School of Law, and the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. In 2007 she began with Casa Alianza in Tegucigalpa, Honduras providing outreach for youth living on the street. As an ICWA Fellow she will write about youth-service programs from several Central American cities as a participant observer.

Derek Mitchell • INDIA
September 2007 - 2009

As a Phillips Talbot Fellow, Derek will explore the impact of global trade and economic growth on Indians living in poverty. He has served for the past year as a volunteer for Swaraj Peeth, an institute in New Delhi dedicated to nonviolent conflict resolution and Mahatma Gandhi's thought. Previously he was a Fulbright scholar in India at the Gandhi Peace Foundation. He has coordinated foreign policy research at George Washington University's Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies and worked as a political organizer in New Hampshire. Derek graduated with a degree in religion from Columbia University.

Raphael Soifer • BRAZIL
April 2007-2009

Raphi is a Donors' Fellow studying, as a participant and observer, the relationship between the arts and social change in communities throughout Brazil. An actor, director, playwright, musician and theatre educator, he has worked in the United States and Brazil, and has taught performance to prisoners and underprivileged youth through People's Palace Projects in Rio de Janeiro and Community Works in San Francisco. He holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies and Anthropology from Yale University.

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